2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
Taira

844 [853] kimonos, and diapers. He is placed under the blanket next to the mother and given a gauze nipple dipped in tea and sugar to suck, which is often his only food for as long as two days if lactation is slow. Meanwhile the afterbirth is wrapped in straw and left under the floorboards in the kitchen to await the outgoing tide.

846 593 Tea is now served in the front room, and the birth is discussed by the women who assisted. On one such occasion, the father and grandmother showed a little boy whose sister had just been born a great deal of affection. The father held the boy in his lap, and both adults told him that he was now a big brother.

844 851 156 At the first hour of the outgoing tide, old women—the grandmother of the baby, relatives, and neighbors—wrap the afterbirth in rice straw and bury it in a specified place outdoors behind the hearth. The purpose of the ceremony is to ensure that the child will be happy and sociable. To the accompaniment of laughing, loud clanging of pots and covers, and calling to each other, the women circle the house. When the burial is completed, they chant loudly, "May this baby always laugh and be pleasant." [152] A stone is then placed over the burial mound so that the infant will not be frightened in his sleep, an emotion which is inferred from the jerking of a young infant while asleep.

852 565 462 [178] Until about 10 years ago a ceremony was performed by descendants of noble families from Shuri over the newborn to ensure success in his future role. For boys, a winnowing basket was propped up against a hoe on which a clump of soil and grass rested. While the father's mother held the child in one arm, she shot an arrow with a bow into the basket. This act was to make certain that the child would become a good hunter (provider) as well as a successful farmer. The grass on the hoe [286] symbolized strength. A girl, on the other hand, received a miniature loom constructed especially for such occasions, which was to assure her success as a weaver of cloth. A spool of banana fiber was presented along with the loom.

852 565 538 There is a story that long, long ago an infant was born on the beach. Immediately after he was born, as he still lay on the sand, a crab crawled over his chest. This infant grew up to be a strong, famous man. Shuri descendants still have a custom of grandmothers holding a newborn boy in their laps and releasing a small crab, which scurries over the infant's chest. These practices, however, are absent in central Taira now and are rarely found in the outlying settlements of predominantly Shuri descendants.

846 178 Formerly mother and child were confined to the darkened delivery room next to the kitchen and at the rear of the house for seven days, while an open fire was kept blazing in the brazier near the mother.

212 Writing Okinawa never developed an independent system of writing; in the old
197 kingdom both Japanese and Chinese were used. Literacy was largely
829 confined to the upper classes, and it is said that students were sent to both
[578] countries for study. Apperently the literati held the Chinese language and culture in high regard while disdaining that of the Japanese; yet, Bettelheim noted in 1851 that Japanese books were very popular in spite of this contempt of the literati.[1] He also stated that the Okinawans always preferred biblical texts written in Japanese to those in Chinese. In view of the political paramouncy of Japan from 1609 and the close linguistic and cultural ties between the two peoples this popularity of Japanese is not surprising. It also should
● [538] be noted that although the literati are reported as preferring Chinese to Japanese, the major literary achievements of Okinawa were written in Japanese. Thus, for example, the Omorosōshi, sixteenth century collection of songs which the late Dr. Ifa has called the Ryukyuan scriptures, was recorded in a Japanese style of writing; the same is true for the annals of the old kingdom and for the first dictionary of the Okinawan language.

212 With the advent of a Japanese administration and educational system,
197 the study of Chinese ceased, and today Japanese is used exclusively. Most Okinawan place names and family names as they are written in Japanese can be given two interpretations, the Japanese and the Okinawan; in a majority of cases the Japanese is given preference. Occasionally when Okinawan speech is transcribed as in the case of lyrics accompanying phonograph records, the Japanese syllabary is used. This is not a suitable devise for transcribing Okinawan speech, which
[104] contains many sounds unfamiliar to Japanese. Unfortunately much of the early linguistic research conducted in this area was rendered virtually worthless by the employment of this syllabary. In recent years scholars like Miyanagn and Kinjo have recorded Ryukyuan using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

197 Conclusion At the present time Okinawan speech enjoys widespread use through-
191 out the whole of the island. It is still the language of the home,
177 and as such it is a more common medium of expression than the official language,
178 Japanese. The latter, backed by the government, schools, and all the forces of modern life, is gradually supplanting Okinawan, but it would be an over-statement to say that the language is dying out. It may be expected that the majority of Okinawans will remain bilingual as they are today until such time when a whole adult generation will speak only Japanese and transmit only Japanese to its offspring.

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1 Bettelheim, n.d., p. 31.